THE Reconstructionist

Vol. IX. January 7, 1944 Tebet 11, 5704 No. 18

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Dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of Israel's ancient homeland, and to the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

the Reconstructionist

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This is a truly creative work. It is scheduled for publication before the Fall of 1944.

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EDITORIALS

HEAL THE BREACH IN JEWISH UNITY

THE victory of the Zionists in the American Jewish Conference over the American Jewish Committee, we fear, proved to be a Pyrrhic victory. All parties concerned have suffered seriously as a consequence and all are the worse off for it.

There is no question that the American Jewish Committee has lost out considerably by its stand toward the Conference. Hadassah, the Rabbinical Assembly, the United Synagogue and associated groups, and quite a number of other religious and fraternal organizations have left the Committee, as have also many individuals of prominence. The resentment which the Committee has aroused against itself is very high, and it will take a long time for it to rid itself of the odium of its having been responsible for the breakup of Jewish unity.

The local communities have also suffered. When questions of appropriations and representation in the American Jewish Committee arise in the various welfare funds (as they have already arisen) there are bound to be heated exchange of opinion and acrimonious debate, and even condemnatory resolutions. We had hoped that, as we built our communities from the bottom, they would solidify our national organizations at the top. Now, unfortunately, the dissension from the top seems to strike at the roots and is destroying the communal unity which has been built up so laboriously.

But if the American Jewish Committee and the local Jewish communities have borne the brunt of this fight, the American Jewish Conference has not escaped unscathed. In the first place, let us be frank and admit that the loss of a member such as the American Jewish Committee is far more serious than its mere numerical strength would indicate. Unfortunately, although in a democracy every person has but one vote, organizations cannot always be rated on a numerical basis. The defection of the American Jewish Committee is important also because of its possible effect on a group of marginal organizations in the Conference. We need name no names, but we know perfectly well that some groups have been too frightened by popular resentment to leave the Conference, and so, although they remain within it, their collaboration with the work of the Conference is not one hundred per cent active and genuine.

Technically the American Jewish Conference is without fault. It is obvious that the split in the ranks has come on

the Commonwealth issue. Here a clear mandate was given the Conference by the overwhelming majority of the delegates—only four votes were cast in the negative, and nineteen abstained from voting—and so, from the point of view of democratic procedure, the Conference was amply justified in the step which it took. However, while we may seek democracy in Jewish life, we cannot but realize that we are dealing with voluntary associations, where the rule of majority cannot always be enforced. The Quakers, it is said, settle their disagreements by discussion, but never take a vote. When there seems to be a consensus, they proceed to action. And again, let us be realistic and recognize that the opposition to the Jewish commonwealth which exists in the United States is greater than the four or even than the twenty-three votes which were not cast in its favor.

Though we favor the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine, we wonder, in the light of subsequent events, whether it was not a mistake for the Zionists to have insisted on the adoption of this formula on the very first occasion, instead of seeking one which could have been adopted unanimously and endeavoring thereafter to convince the opposition. Even if the Zionists could not, after prolonged discussion, win the conference as a whole to their viewpoint, they could continue, through their own organization, to agitate for a maximalist program beyond the commitment of the Conference, though not in conflict with it.

Since its initial festive meeting, the American Jewish Conference has become relatively quiescent. It is no longer engaged in public debate, and whatever program of activities it is carrying on is as yet secondary to the existing organizations. Indeed, the Conference admits that it does not seek to supersede any organization, but only to help coordinate its work with that of others. Thus the Zionist Emergency Committee continues to go on with the Palestine commonwealth agitation; a self-appointed group of Jewish guardians is agitating a vigorous program of rescue work; so, too, is the American Jewish Congress; the Joint Distribution Committee, naturally, goes forward with plans for fund-raising; bills introduced into Congress for the rescue of Jews or for the suppression of anti-Semitism have their inspiration in a variety of sources without centralized Jewish approval. Everything is as yet as it was, except that another office has been added, and another organization.

The Conference can hardly fulfil the hopes which its convocation called forth without the affiliation of the American Jewish Committee and the group of other dissidents in its tow. We want the conference to function as originally designed, to speak the united voice of American Jewry. This most promising effort must not be permitted to end ingloriously. There is much correct and righteous indignation against appeasement, but human wisdom has not yet invented a better way of resolving differences of opinion than compromise. This is clearly a situation where differences must be compromised in order to achieve united action. Few institutions of consequence were ever perfected at the first trial, and here, in the words of the old adage, we must try again. A genuine Jewish unity must still be achieved. This is not a matter which concerns the honor of a few individluals; the welfare of a whole people is at stake. On all parties rests the responsibility for renewing efforts to bring back all dissident elements into the American Jewish Conference. We recommend particularly that local Jewish community organizations whose members are represented in both camps, and who have their own vital

stake in the achievement of Jewish unity, take the initiative, as some have already done, toward healing the breach.

A COMMUNITY PROBLEM THAT MUST NOT BE NEGLECTED

USUALLY, letters that come to our desk from readers are printed in the Correspondence column; but one letter we received recently raises a question which is important enough to be discussed in our editorial department. We quote from the letter:

"I am . . . employed in one of the two school centers in . . . (naming the city) which is the largest of the Federal Housing Projects for war workers and their families. . . . I would like to call your attention to some conditions which exist and which should be called to the attention of (the local) Jewry in their relation to the Jews who are strangers in this vicinity.

"To date no effort whatsoever has been made by any of the congregations or the Community Center to contact Jewish families. . . . I made a definite effort to contact two of the so-called Conservative rabbis before the High Holidays. I also contacted the Community Center. They have asked me about the Jewish families but have done nothing about it. These families are shipyard workers, do not have the time nor perhaps the inclination to make the effort to become acquainted with the Jewish community. . . . The community resents the influx of war workers. . . . No attempt is being made to know or understand these people and help them adjust to a life vastly different from that which they have left. . . .

"As a stranger and a layman, I am willing to help in any capacity I can, but action must first be taken by responsible leaders of the community. If only they could be made to see that here they have the opportunity of a life-time to unite in constructive action which does not entail 'charity' or the raising of funds to help our unfortunate brethren. . . ."

The men and women in uniform are undoubtedly receiving the best kind of spiritual assistance from chaplains; but these men and women, whose work is as vital as that of the armed forces, are apparently thrown on their own resources or are left to the unorganized efforts of Jewish institutions and individuals. The USO provides primarily for the uniformed men and women; if funds are left, they are allocated to the needs of civilian workers. If the conditions described by this correspondent are typical of the whole country, the civilians are being neglected at a time when their needs are great and the opportunities to evoke Jewish loyalty are many. Such neglect may cost Jewish life dearly in the years to come and the responsibility will weigh heavily upon both local agencies and national organizations.

We can well understand how difficult it is for individual congregations to undertake large-scale programs of spiritual guidance to the hundreds of newly settled families. This, of course, does not excuse them from doing everything in their power to help, but their limitation as individual organizations must be recognized. The significant fact which emerges from the situation is the urgent need for establishing functioning and responsible Jewish Communities. Without them, the Jewish population has no address. Without them, new settlers become everyone's responsibility, — and hence, no one's responsibility. The correspondent mentions the efficient and useful work done by the united Churches of that community. The Jewish Congregations have not even succeeded in uniting their own activities.

"One of the rabbis mentioned something of some kind of united action, but that is as far as it went."

We should like to ask some questions: Are the congregations in various communities engaged in concerted action to meet this new and challenging situation? Does the USO have sufficient resources and facilities to provide for the religious, educational and social needs of civilian war-workers? Do those cities which have Jewish Community Councils utilize them for integrating strangers into the local Jewish life? What is being done to counteract the unfortunate circumstance that local Jews "resent" the new settlers, particularly when those strangers are in the lower income brackets?

We should like some enlightenment on these matters from those organizations and institutions who have assumed responsibility for providing the spiritual leadership in this crisis.

A GREAT FORWARD STEP FOR RECONSTRUCTIONISM

ON Sunday afternoon, January 9th, an event will take place which will doubtless attract little notice in these days of world-shaking occurrences. And yet, to those who view it with eyes of faith, it promises more of hope and salvation for American Jewry than many a widely publicized convention or spectacular mass demonstration. We refer to the meeting which will be held on that date for the purpose of launching the Reconstructionist Fellowship.

For with the launching of the Fellowship, Reconstructionism will enter on a new phase of its career. It will cease being a mere school of thought and will emerge as an activist religious movement, one that, it is hoped, will change the entire aspect of Jewish life and give new vitality to Judaism in America.

The fundamental principle of Reconstructionism has recently gained widespread acceptance. The number is constantly growing of those who agree with us in viewing Judaism as the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish people. In Conservative circles Reconstructionism is recognized by many as affording that philosophical basis and practical program of action for which the Conservative movement has been groping. In Reform circles the progressive element tend to see in it a point of view and a pattern of living which is in keeping with that liberalism and progressivism that they regard as the permanent contribution of Reform to Jewish life. Zionists who want Zionism to contribute to the enhancement of Jewish life, not only in Palestine but also here in America and wherever Jews live, are coming increasingly to see in Reconstructionism the only program that clearly envisages that objective. In fact, all American Jews, except those who still cling to a literal interpretation of *Torah min-ha-shamayim,* or are prejudiced against religion, or are dominated by an escapist and assimilationist psychosis, may be regarded as actual or potential Reconstructionists.

But to rally all this potential strength and to transform intellectual acquiescence into effective action is no easy task. It requires a wholly different form of organization from any now in existence. In order to convert mere theoretic assent into zealous and devoted action, membership in the Reconstructionist Fellowship cannot be based, as in most other organizations, merely on the payment of dues, or even on attending meetings that pass motions to authorize collective activities and delegate their execution to elected officers or a paid staff. Reconstructionism involves the acceptance of responsibilities for Jewish living that cannot be delegated to special functionaries. Judaism can-

not be lived by proxy. The reconstruction of Jewish life must begin with the reconstruction of the habits of individual Jews.

That is why, unlike other Jewish organizations, the Reconstructionist Fellowship lays down the acceptance of certain specific personal obligations for Jewish life as a requirement of membership. The applicant must undertake to live his life publicly and privately as a Jew without concealment or denial of his Jewish identity. He must undertake to seek in Judaism the means of spiritual growth, by cultivating habits of Jewish worship, study and action. He must, finally, undertake to seek the maximum of fellowship and collaboration with other Jews for the survival of the Jewish people and the advancement of Jewish civilization. In the formal application for membership in the Fellowship, all these requirements are elaborated much more specifically than space permits in this editorial. Moreover, just as the admission of individuals to membership in the Fellowship will depend on their assuming definite commitments, so the chartering of a group as a chapter of the Fellowship will be conditioned on its acceptance of a program of Reconstructionist activities.

In laying down these conditions of membership for individuals and of affiliation for groups, the intention is not to be exclusive. All who take Reconstructionism seriously and wish to further it can qualify for membership. But they must take Reconstructionism seriously. We do not want the half-hearted and passive to hamper action by the sheer weight of their inertia. Nor do we want the half-convinced to join the Fellowship. They should be encouraged to learn more about the movement, to read its literature and to attend its meetings; eventually they may be wholly convinced. But the Fellowship must be constituted entirely of men and women who believe wholeheartedly in Reconstructionism. Only if so constituted, will it be able to demonstrate what an intense devotion to Judaism as a religious civilization can mean in the lives of Jews. And only by such demonstration, and not by mere argument, can it so impress the values of Jewish life on American Jewry as to redeem it from assimilationism and escapism and to activate its will to live.

REALITIES AND VALUES

THE JEWS ARE STILL FREQUENTLY spoken of as a race, but communities of Jews keep cropping up here and there who definitely belong to other races than the white, to which most Jews clearly belong. There was until recently the community of Chinese Jews in Kai-Fung Fu, there are the Hindu Jews of Bombay, the Falashas of Abyssinia, the Negro Jews of New York's Harlem; and now we learn of a Jewish community whose racial composition is mainly American Indian. Our information is contained in an article by Rabbi S. Felix Mendelsohn in *The Sentinel* of November 4, 1943. It appears that in 1657, three years after the first Jewish settlers came to New Amsterdam, a certain Louis de Carvajal was authorized by the Spanish King, Philip II, to take with him 100 persons for the purpose of settling in Mexico. He was a marrano and so were the hundred men he took with him. They came no doubt to escape the Inquisition. He believed that the American Indians were the Ten Lost Tribes and so he encouraged not only friendly relations with them, but also intermarriage. This community, after having lived ostensibly as Catholics but secretly as Jews for 350 years, openly espoused Judaism in 1910, and in 1925 they dedicated a small synagogue of their own in Mexico City. We Jews, in response to anti-Semitic insin-

uations of alienage often point to the fact that Jews were among the first white settlers in America, but this particular congregation of Mexico Jews may claim to be descended of a native American stock that lived on American soil before any of the "pale face" immigrants came from overseas.

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WHEN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS insert advertisements in the press calling upon the public to attack anti-Semitism it leaves us cold. The problem of combating anti-Semitism is not our problem. But now a metropolitan daily, the *New York Post*, of December 23, 1943, publishes a full-page ad in which, "for the first time in history," to quote from the ad, "Christians accuse Christendom of being a silent accessory to the crime of racial hatred through hundreds of years of inhuman ostracism, mass torture and murder," and call for the renunciation and expiation of these crimes in an action that "will smash anti-Semitism and save this continent from Fascism." In such action we find a genuine encouragement. The ad was inserted by the Text Book Commission organized by the Protestant Digest, Inc. There is no doubt that the Church's putting on the Jews the responsibility for the crucifixion and stigmatizing the Jewish people as anti-Christ has been largely responsible for the genesis of anti-Semitism; perhaps a sincere revision of references to Jews in all religious text books may contribute to its exodus.

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RUSSIA HAS DROPPED THE INternationale as its official anthem and adopted a national anthem in its place. The change has been commented on as indicative of the liquidation of the policy of world-revolution and the determination of the Soviet regime to seek a place—a prominent place to be sure—in the concert of nations. To us it is indicative of much more. It is symbolic of the inevitable resurgence of nationalism wherever a people shares a great common experience. Liberals in America have been too often inclined to think of a world order as involving the elimination of nationalism. Nationalism has been a troublemaker by giving rise to inevitable conflicts of national interest that make peace difficult. That is true. So does the fact of human personality make difficult the neighborly conduct of individuals by emphasizing different and at times conflicting interests. But we can have no peace within any nation so long as the rights of human personality are not recognized, and no international peace so long as the rights of nations to their nationhood are not recognized. Let Jewish liberals in particular take notice. The Jews have shared common experiences from the days of our nomadic ancestors to the present. Jewish nationalism, in the sense of the will to a collective Jewish life, cannot be overlooked in our plans for the future.

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AT A RECENT MEETING OF THE Conference on Jewish Relations, the executive secretary, Dr. Theodore H. Gaster, presented a plan for the erection of an international commission of Jewish scholars and educators to act as advisors on the post-war restoration of Jewish cultural life in Enrope. Certainly, if Jews can and will return to the lands of their origin or original residence, they will want to reestablish their institutions of learning, their synagogues and schools. This type of planning is surely to be commended, for Jews have never lived in Europe, for long, by bread alone. But it is questionable whether the planners are being altogether helpful when they prescribe in advance what the cultural institutions should or should not do. "Jewish cultural life," Dr. Gaster is reported as saying,

"must disavow parochial isolationism. . . . It must be prepared, if necessary, to undergo radical transformation." Perhaps so; but we hope that American Jews will permit European Jewry—if and when it is rehabilitated—to work out its own destiny. "Parochial isolationism" sounds like a strong indictment. We should be careful not to impose certain American prejudices on our European brothers.

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THE AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR Judaism, Inc., does not care how low it stoops to make a point. This time it distorts an address by Emanuel Neumann, delivered before the Junior Hadassah convention. In the "Information Bulletin" issued by the Council, Mr. Neumann is quoted as saying that the "nation which is to arise in Palestine need not necessarily be called officially the Jewish Commonwealth. . . . It will be a free and democratic nation composed of Jews, Moslems, Christians and, if there are any, also Buddhists—compatriots all." On the basis of this quotation, taken completely out of context, Mr. Neumann is offered membership in the Council; of course, they concede that he is "probably" not "yet" ready to join, but their arms are open. Unfortunately for the Council, Mr. Neumann is altogether disqualified from achieving the signal honor of membership in the fraternity of Zion-haters. In his address, he says, "If, then, we are asked what do we mean by the adjective Jewish as applied to the future Commonwealth of Palestine, my answer is that . . . the Jewish people will attain a numerical majority in Palestine and thereby permanently guarantee the open door for others who may follow. . . . The Jews will preponderate. . . . It will be a free and democratic and preponderantly Jewish state. . . . " Suppose you read—and print—the whole speech, Rabbi Berger, and then tell us how welcome Mr. Neumann would be in your ranks! Better yet: ask Mr. Neumann about his intentions.

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WE HEAR A GOOD DEAL ABOUT the new role of American Jewry as the bearer of the Jewish cultural tradition, now that European Jewry has been reduced to ashes. Look at the record: The Jewish Publication Society, celebrating its 55th anniversary, reports that it now has 6,335 enrolled members! This is hardly the sort of evidence that would point to our assuming the intellectual leadership of world Jewry. Despite optimistic reports American Jewry is still predominantly *illiterate* Jewishly, and we should face that fact and begin to cope with it. Compare the report of *Am Oved,* the publishing affiliate of the Histadrut in Palestine. In its first year, it sold over 140,000 copies of books published by itself. These included translations of foreign classics, and of standard works on current problems as well as original Hebrew works, and a series of volumes for young readers. And there are only 550,000 Jews in Palestine as compared with 5,000,000 in America. It appears that the renaissance of Hebrew culture will come from Eretz Yisrael. If American Jewry hopes to share with Palestine the cultural leadership of world Jewry, our people here will have to begin to read.

Joseph—An Ancient New Dealer

By JACOB J. WEINSTEIN

THE story of Joseph is the prototype of all success stories. We seldom vicariously tread the road from rags to riches, or climb the greasy pole to fame without some vague or vivid reminder of the favorite son of the Patriarch Jacob. Yes, Joseph was the spoiled darling of an indulgent father given to annoying dreams. Nature had generously endowed him with charm of face and feature, grace of personality, keen intelligence, but also with a touch of "I" trouble. He had a most immoderate sense of his own importance. His ego had to escape into dreams to find room to strut its peacock feathers. You recall how he dreamed that the sheaves of his brothers bowed down to his sheaf and how the sun and the moon and the eleven stars, representing his father, mother and eleven brothers, did obeissance to his brilliant rising star.

From the Pit to the Palace

His brothers annoyed by his arrant boasting bound him and threw him into a slimy pit. For seventy-two hours he lay in the pit and thought back on the course of his conduct until the scales of self-deceiving vanity fell from his eyes and he realized that he had merited this treatment from his brothers. The pit, by virtue of introspection and travail, became a womb. Joseph was re-born into a mature man. The fires of remorse had burned away the silver tinsel of the mirrors of life in which he saw only himself. The mirrors became windows through which he could see men as his brothers and not as bits of stage property designed to enhance his appearance.

One trip to the purging pit was not enough. Joseph was destined for great works and the Lord tested him mightily. The Ishmaelite merchants sold Joseph to Potiphar, the captain to Pharaoh, and he became Potiphar's valuable and trusted servant. Then the wife of Potiphar was smitten with the Hebrew lad's grace and beauty and urged him to become her lover. Joseph, true to his trust, true to the memory of his father and to the faith of Abraham, withstood this temptation. Virtue was *not* its own reward. The jilted princess seized Joseph's mantle and accused him of lecherous assault. Potiphar had to maintain his wife's position, though he may have had his doubts. Joseph was again cast into the pit. He spent several years in prison. But Joseph was now a man of inner resources. He realized that life is what you make it—that iron bars need not a prison make. He became helpful to the warden—a sort of trusty—probably anticipated Warden Lawes' reforms in this Egyptian jail. He became a confidant of the other prisoners. They told him their troubles and their dreams. It happened once that Pharaoh's ex-baker and Pharaoh's ex-butler had each a dream during the night. They told their dreams to him and Joseph, giving credit to his God, interpreted the dreams. And as he had predicted, so it happened—the baker was hanged and the butler was restored.

The butler had promised that he would try to bring Joseph's case to the attention of the proper authorities, but men are things that think a little but chiefly forget. The butler, enjoying his new-found freedom, forgot all about the wronged Hebrew lad who was wasting his unique gifts in a prison cell. Then Pharaoh dreamed a dream. He dreamed that seven fat contented cows were grazing on the bank of the Nile when seven lean and

hungry cows came up and devoured the seven "Carnation milk" cows, but remained lean and Cassius-like withal. And the dream censor, convinced, no doubt, that the Egyptian monarch was a bit slow on the pick-up, repeated the dream. This time seven ripe full ears of corn are combing their fine silken beards in the breeze when seven blasted, mildewed toothless scare-crow ears slither up from the same stalk and devour the seven good ears and full—yet remain gaunt and rickety for all their gorging.

Now Pharaoh summons his brain trust composed of the long beards and high hats of Egypt, also the astrologers, the crystal-gazers, the soothsayers and the plain and fancy magicians to explain to him the meaning of his dreams. Not having the benefit of Sigmund Freud's researches into the meaning of dreams, they fail. Pharaoh's respect for his brain trust has sunk considerably below freezing point and there is danger of a purge, when the butler remembers Joseph—makes mention of his own former sins and expiates his own forgetfulness by telling Pharaoh of the remarkable ability of the Hebrew lad.

Joseph is brought before the throne of Egypt and tells the nature of the Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph judiciously and modestly claims no occult or divining powers for himself; he states merely that his God, the God of the Hebrews, may reveal to him the meaning of the dream. You see, Joseph is shrewd enough to know that the glory that will be reflected upon him as the servant of a successful God will be far greater than the glory that he might achieve in his own right as a gifted analyst of dreams. Incidentally, his failure might not then send him to the chopping block.

So Joseph explains that the dreams are a double warning that Egypt is to be visited with seven rich and fruitful years, which in turn are to be followed by seven years of famine. The Nile, fertile and opulent, like a 3000-mile long cornucopia, was to become a stingy Scrooge. The amber fields of grain and corn were to become sun-baked wastes of barren desolation.

To convince Pharaoh that the interpretation of dreams is not an idle indoor sport and that a dreamer of dreams can also be a practical man of affairs, Joseph advises the King to appoint a man discreet and wise to act as Emergency Food Director—to collect a fifth of the produce of the land in the good years and to store up the surplus against the seven bad years, that the land perish not through the famine. Pharaoh is delighted with this counsel. He asks his purple-robed academicians, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?" He takes off his signet ring and puts it upon Joseph's hand, places a gold chain about his neck, has him clad in fine linen vestures, and declares him to be second in command of the Empire. And to clinch the matter, Pharaoh presents Joseph with a wife from the high priestly family of "On," the very first family among the blue-bloods of the Nile. When Joseph, arrayed in the vestments of the high office, rides the royal chariot, runners race before him shouting *"Abrek! Abrek!"* — Make way for the Lord Viceroy of Egypt.

Joseph As Food Administrator

Joseph ably applies the principle of the ever normal granary plus the principle of insurance (state insurance, in fact) and with the fifth share of these seven bumper crops years he is able not only to supply the needs of the people of Egypt, but of the surrounding territory as well. It was through this fact that Joseph was dramatically reunited with his family and gallantly met one of the hardest tests that face the small town boy who makes good in a big way.

When Joseph saw his rough, primitive, cattle-smelling brothers — their hayseed

qualities in sharp and pungent contrast to the subtly perfumed refinements of the Egyptian court—he could have hidden his identity from them. He could have rationalized such a decision with convincing ardor: "They (the brothers) would be mortified by a reminder of their cruelty to him; they would weaken his position with Pharaoh and thus endanger the lives of hundreds of thousands he was saving by his food conservation policies; they would be unhappy among people who worshiped strange gods, disliked foreigners in general, and had a vast contempt for nomadic shepherds and cattlemen." He could have administered unction to his soul by the thought that his own happiness was not alone at stake; his wife, Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, and his sons, Menasseh and Ephraim, were also to be considered. And had he not called his first-born "Menasseh" because, in his own words, "God had made me to forget all my toil and all my father's house?" And he could have appeased his conscience by sending a very elaborate gift anonymously to his father. There is hardly any one who does not know of some person who has risen—not nearly as high as Joseph, but only a rung or two above the social level of his father's house, and who has thereafter denied the rock whence he was digged and lived in fear and trembling at the possibility that some day the bearded father or the old-fashioned mother with an old country accent might walk into the charmed circle of his accentless, streamlined Yankee friends.

Joseph was loyal to the sources of his being. He not only rejoiced in being reconciled to his family, but he invited the whole tribe to move to Egypt where he could be sure of their safety. Not only that! He presumed on the value of his work to Pharaoh to ask for a special portion of land where his people might live by the same kind of labor which they had performed in Canaan. It is well for us to remember that instead of resenting this, Pharaoh respected Joseph all the more for his family loyalty. He asked for the privilege of meeting the father of so remarkable a son, and accepted a blessing from the old patriarch—though in the sight of the Egyptians, he (Pharaoh) was a god, a dispenser of blessings in his own right. Nor did Joseph advise his brothers to hide the fact that they were cattlemen—although the Nile peasants held cattlemen as abominations. When asked their occupation by Pharaoh, they said: "Thy servants have been keepers of cattle from their youth even until now, both we and our fathers." How did Pharaoh react to this answer? He asked if some of their men were available to supervise his own large herds. He was free of the vulgar prejudices of the people. He was aristocrat enough to recognize the value of talented shepherds.

So Joseph was mindful of his father's house and returned his brothers' cruelty with kindness. The hurt they had intended for him, by casting him into the pit and selling him to the Ishmaelite merchants, was God's devious way of performing the miracle of salvation. But Joseph failed in another test. He failed to extend the vertical loyalties of the family and the clan to the rest of human society. Like a certain other royal Chamberlain, he brought peace only for his time.

Where Joseph Failed

There was one fatal flaw in Joseph's plan. When the Egyptians came to get corn from the royal granaries, they had to pay good money for that corn; when they ran out of money, they brought their livestock, and when the livestock was gone, they mortgaged their land, and when the land was gone, they made themselves indentured servants to the crown. Joseph may have felt that the Egyptian royal household would not abuse this

power. He had not had the benefit of the long historical record which prompted Lord Acton to say, "Power corrupts and great power corrupts greatly." By failing to understand the nature of bureaucratic power, Joseph not only aggravated the conditions of the Egyptian masses, but created the groundwork of those circumstances that were later to enslave his own people in bitter and ruthless bondage. Like so many successful *sh'tadlanim,* Joseph forgot to reckon on a time when a pharaoh might arise who would not know Joseph. Or, perhaps he did have a premonition of such times; for did he not leave instructions that, when his people returned to Palestine, they take up his bones with them? By failing to act on this premonition, Joseph missed a place in the permanent hall of fame. He was a great personal success and was very good to his family. He earned a temporary reprieve from famine for his people, but he goes down in the universal record book of history as Pharaoh's white haired boy —as the man who made an inefficient tyranny efficient and thus gave it longer lease of life.

Where Brandeis Was Wiser

It required another dreamer who was also a practical statesman to understand the true nature of power and to appreciate the real curse of bigness. This was Louis D. Brandeis. He was the gifted interpreter of the dreams of Wilson's New Freedom and Roosevelt's New Deal. He fought the cases, wrote the laws, perfected the industrial techniques by which the Federal Government could impound the surplus of the good years for the years of famine, both in the national life and in the life of each individual. There is not a single feature of our Social Security program which was not anticipated by one or the other of Brandeis' briefs. But Brandeis feared the power of a giant government bureaucracy as much as he feared the power of vast industrial monopolies. He saw how these monopolies lose the personal touch, the moral and ethical restraints that check the ambitions of the individual. He saw them corrupt legislatures and judiciaries and debauch working populations and finally cast them on the waste heaps of big business.

While he realized that strong federal instrumentalities like the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Federal Securities Commission were necessary to check the powers of these octopus monopolies, he considered them as palliatives only. Federal instrumentalities could also become impersonal and be corrupted by political power, just as the giant corporations became anti-social through economic power. The general welfare work would not be promoted by building up a state Leviathan to check an industrial Behemoth. Nature had written finis to the dinosaur and the mastodon because their size had proven a handicap in the struggle for survival. Human nature, the Justice believed, would not be able to adjust itself to these vast impersonal aggregations of power—political or economic.

His solution was to decentralize, to break up our large units, so that they could be manageable and controllable. Whatever we might sacrifice in the cost per unit of a manufactured article would be more than made up by the healthier social conditions that would prevail. His plan called for the development of cooperatives to shrink the two heavy displacement of the distributive process in our economic structure; for the growth of strong and responsible labor unions to balance the power of the associated and organized capitalists, and above all, for that free, popular and sound education which would train a man for total citizenship as consumer, producer and member of a family.

We are just now crossing another Red Sea in escape from a streamlined barbar-

ian pharaoh, and in order to meet the vast pressure of his totalitarian powers, we have had to surrender many of our liberties to our Government and to move quickly in the direction of a centralized all-powerful Federal Government. But this is an emergency. When we have overthrown the new Pharaoh and are ready to journey to the Promised Land, let us not forget the bones of Joseph. Moses did not forget them. That is why he wrote the jubilee law into his code. This law provided that the land should revert to its original owner every fiftieth year and it provided a moratorium on all debts. This was a literal New Deal. Every man was given a fresh chance to start anew. Thus equality of opportunity was guaranteed without destroying initiative and the differential rewards which such initiative deserves. It was the first great attempt to achieve both a democracy of equality and a democracy of liberty.

Brandeis, heir to the Mosaic tradition and to the influences of the American frontier, believed that this twofold democracy was the crying need of the 20th century. He saw how Russia had achieved a very substantial democracy of economic equality—but at the price of personal liberty. The vast political bureaucracy of the Soviet State had too often crushed the freedom of the individual. He saw how America had achieved the largest measure of the democracy of liberty but at the expense of economic equality. The rugged individualism of our captains of industry had too often preserved for great sections of the people the freedom to sell apples on the street corner or the liberty to starve. He realized, as did no other statesman of our time, that what was needed was a commonwealth which would guarantee economic equality to the extent of providing the food, clothing, shelter and psychological security necessary to the life of the citizen while still preserving areas of free enterprise where individual initiative and talent could find their best and most fruitful expression.

It is understandable therefore that Brandeis should have written that the twenty centuries old idealism of Judaism was the great need of modern America. It is no less understandable why he should have believed that the reconstruction of the Hebrew Commonwealth in Palestine by Jews inspired by their tradition would provide a helpful blueprint for the establishment of true democracy everywhere, of that society where each man is allowed the fullest development of his potentialities with due regard for the equal right of his neighbor. That will be the New Deal which will create a new heaven and a new earth.

Israel's Spiritual Homeland

By THEODORE FRIEDMAN

Wherever Israel went into exile, the Shekhina (divine presence) went into exile with them. (Talmud)

My spiritual homeland has been destroyed. (From the suicide note of Stefan Zweig)

THERE are words in the human vocabulary that are heavily weighted; to utter them is to set in motion long trains of association. They are redolent of man's most intimate experience. Time cannot dissipate their aroma. Of such is the word home. In innumerable ways, seen and unseen, a man's home insinuates itself into his very being. Its geography becomes the pattern against which he contrasts the scenes he may ever view. The one time dweller by the ocean

shore will always hear, no matter how far he may be removed, the pounding of the surf and the scream of the sea gull. The language of home becomes, once and for all time, the channel within whose banks one's thinking is contained and with whose tide one's emotions flow. Home with all its rich complex of impressions is the matrix of man's experience. Destroy a man's home and you destroy the tap root of his being. A wanderer lives always in some vital relationship to home. It may be the ultimate goal of his journey or, even no less vital, the source of his yearning and memory about which he intends nothing. He who is truly homeless is in infinitely worse case than the wanderer. For him, there is neither the past, redeemed from death by the surge of recreative memory or the golden vista of homecoming; only an ever present alienism, the dispiriting sense of not belonging.

One often hears the Jewish experience described as two thousand years of homelessness, a bi-millenial alienism. A fantastic impossibility! No people could possibly have survived that and remain a people. The terms must be understood in a purely physical sense. They have reference to the Jew's political status, his civil and legal condition, never his spiritual. Yehezkel Kaufman in his *Golah Ve'-Nekhar,* has marshaled an impressive body of fact and interpretation for his thesis that the Jew was everywhere, except of course in Palestine, an alien, a people in temporary sojourn. Neither Roman citizenship nor medieval charters availed to alter that status. Nor did length of residence and a high degree of cultural assimilation remove the stamp of alien. Taken alone, this fact can help account for the preservation of the Jew. It cannot account for the miracle of his spiritual creativity. That must be sought elsewhere.

In more than one decree of expulsion the Jews were bracketed with the Gypsies. Dante speaks of them in the same breath in the eleventh canto of the *Inferno.* For they were both foreigners. And yet, how different! The Gypsies were ever a homeless people; ours was purely a physical homelessness. Even the modern ethnologist is hard put to it to discover the ultimate origin of the Gypsy folk. The consciousness of his home never left the Jew. Zangwill's *bon mot,* "If the Jews could not live in Palestine, Palestine lived in the Jew," does not do the Jewish consciousness of home full justice. It did not end with the belief in and prayer for an ultimate return homeward. The Jew's very terms of reference had been permanently fixed by his home. A small but not unimportant illustration: In the eleventh century, the Italian Jewish chronicler Achimaatz, waxing enthusiastic over the great learning of some local Jewish communities exclaimed: "For from Bari shall go forth the Law, and the word of God from Tarento." In the thirteenth century, the learning of R. Isaac Or Zarua moved a contemporary to apply the same apostrophe to Vienna, the locale of that scholar's activity. Only yesterday one spoke of Vilna as *Yerushalayim D'Lita.* The Jew traveled light through the centuries but not so light that he could not carry his homeland with him. The only soil of the homeland with which the average Jew ever came in contact was the little bagful reverently placed in his grave. The soul of the homeland, he had ever with him. His festivals were gauged by a warmer sun than that which shone in the Judengasse. His speech in its permanent sub-stratum was the speech of the homeland. He took the old Hebrew words and often gave them new meaning; a meaning that bespoke an expanding moral attitude. Contrast the Hebrew and Yiddish meanings of the word *korban.* In pre-modern Hebrew (modern Hebrew has already been influenced by Yiddish) *korban* always mean sacrifice. In Yid-

dish, it often denotes victim. No expansion or change in meaning could dislodge the language that had become imbedded in every Jewish vernacular. Jewish religious culture was an organic product; its hub (the Bible), from which its various branches radiated, was immovably centered in the homeland.

The diaspora was growing in extent and numbers long before a Roman legionaire hurled a firebrand into the Temple. Some would have it that even then the diaspora community was larger than that of Palestine. Whatever the relative proportions, the Romans were too late if they intended to destroy the Jewish homeland and render the Jew homeless. The Jew had long since learned the art of taking his home with him. His spiritual homeland was an idea; more accurately a whole web of ideas. And against ideas, firebrands are helpless.

Discussion in Theology

THE QUEST FOR SALVATION

By MORDECAI M. KAPLAN

THE object of man's will to achieve the optimum as well as maximum use of life is known by various names. The ethicists call it "happiness," "*summum bonum,*" or "growth." The traditionalists call it "a share in the world-to-come," "life abundant," or "salvation." These terms designate what man actually strives after, or should deliberately strive after, if he wants to be true to his essential nature as man. In this discussion, the term "salvation" will be used because it is the widest in scope and depth.

The quest for salvation, whether as fact or as norm, is more distinctively human than any other differentia. Whatever else has been named as the human differentia turns out upon close scrutiny to be possessed, even if in a very minute degree, by the sub-human. But the very nature of salvation precludes it from being an object of striving, even in the minutest degree, of any creature but man. In fact, even man began to engage in that quest only in the comparatively recent stages of his career on earth. The reason the quest for salvation is so uniquely human is that it necessarily involves making conscious choices among entire patterns of living, with a view to determining which pattern will yield most life. This is not possible for any but a highly developed human mind. To conceive an entire pattern of living implies being self-conscious, that is, capable of holding in one's mental grasp a cluster of remembered situations as well as a quickly changing complex of imagined situations. The mind must be able to abstract from both the remembered and the possible situations enough elements to weave into a pattern which shall include what is most likely to satisfy our various hungers and needs to a maximum degree.

The function of the historical religions and of the various philosophies of life has been to present to later generations the kind of life-pattern which seemed to satisfy the earlier generations in their quest for salvation. A time comes when those religions and philosophies are challenged. That means that new conditions arise which offer alternatives to the ideas and habits that have come down from the

past. These alternative ideas and habits may either be assimilated by the traditional religions and philosophies, or form the content of new religions and philosophies. Both possibilities are being realized in our day.

The basic interest in salvation, as such, is at present without a scientific discipline. To inaugurate such a discipline would be entirely in order; it might go by the name of Soterics. One of its functions would be to make a systematic study of all forms of striving after salvation, by whomsoever and by whatever religion or philosophy directed. We might then discover the traits which all those strivings have in common and wherein they differ. In the meantime, I venture to submit what I have discovered to be the case with all life-patterns which are organized with a view to salvation. All such life patterns are three-dimensional in character, in that they reckon with three types of human interest. Though organically interrelated with one another, and incapable of operating independently, these interests cannot be resolved into or equated with one another. The term "human interest" here refers to an entire psychic configuration which includes 1) a drive or impulse, 2) a want, hunger or feeling of lack, and 3) a value, or goal toward which the drive is directed.

Whenever a human being consciously refuses to yield to some dominant desire or ambition, in order to be or do his best or to live up to some standard of what is expected of him, he is engaged in making the most of his life. It is then that not only his will to live but the will to make the most of life, or the will to salvation, is active. Now the striking fact about the human being is that, whenever the will to salvation is active in him, he is more or less aware of interests which are such distinct types that they may be said to lie in entirely different dimensions of living. The awareness may be affirmative, as when an interest is accepted as legitimate, or negative, as when the interest in question is regarded as too obstreperous or altogether illegitimate. All human interests may be classified into three distinct categories, each category constituting, as it were, a different dimension of human life. In so far as man strives to achieve not only the "good life," but "the full life," or "life abundant," his life possesses breadth, depth and elevation.

The dimension of breadth is the dimension of functional or welfare interests; the dimension of depth is the dimension of rational interests, and the dimension of elevation is the dimension of spiritual interests. The purpose in designating them as belonging to three dimensions is to imply that those of one dimension are so incommensurate with those in either of the other two as to be in no way capable of being derived from, equated with or reduced to it. Insofar as it is at all possible to isolate from the stream of human living any one experience or event to which we give a name, we shall find that, to deal adequately with it, we have to reckon with it as having the three foregoing dimensions. By ignoring any one of them, we shall fail to grasp the experience or event as alive and only know it as a dead specimen of life.

First, the welfare interests include all those configurations which center about security, health, mating, social recognition, the utilization of excess function in play and the creative arts. This is the realm wherein fear, the sense of danger, and libido, the craving for prestige and self-expression, constitute springs of action. Efficiency in satisfying these interests depends upon knowledge of cause-and-effect relations and of means-and-ends relations.

Secondly, the dimension of rational interests centers about two demands of human nature in its will to salvation. They

are the demand 1) for truth as contrasted with illusion or error, and 2) for righteousness or justice, as contrasted with all that is unethical. Efficiency in the pursuit of these interests implies a hunger for rationality and a passion for righteousness, and the ability to satisfy them.

Thirdly, the dimension of the spiritual interests. It is in this dimension or type of interest that we shall find the datum which forms the basis of man's belief in the existence of God.

The spiritual interests revolve about three data of which men become aware in the striving after salvation, data which constitute goals or purposes to be fostered and cultivated, if the objective in striving after life abundant is to be achieved. These data are: 1) The experience of being a center of initiative. That is the experience of *selfhood.* If successfully fostered it gives rise to a sense of personality. The process of fostering it involves focusing on the aspect of *responsibility,* which is a corollary of being a center of initiative, or of freedom to choose among different courses of action. 2) The experience of being integrally related to a social context. This is the experience of *otherhood.* If successfully fostered it gives rise to a sense of family, of country, of church and possibly of humanity as a whole. The process of fostering it involves focusing on the aspect of *loyalty.* 3) The experience of finding *the world dependable,* from the standpoint of the will to salvation. This means that by conforming to what we assume, or discover to be, the direction in which the world is moving, we fulfil ourselves, we realize to the maximum our creative potentialities. If successfully fostered, that experience makes us aware of godhood in the world. The process of fostering it involves focusing on the aspect of *piety.*

Common to all these three groups of spiritual interests is the sense of holiness. We might also attribute the quality of holiness to the dimension of rationality, for the pursuit of truth and justice for their own sake is likewise often experienced as uniquely indispensable to salvation. We might well ask: what in all these values which are consciously related to salvation calls forth the sense of holiness? The answer is: it is the feeling that in achieving or experiencing these values we are experiencing inner growth, or increase, in that which renders us distinctively human. At the same time, we are reaching out for a type of reality which transcends that which we have in common with the rest of creation. The urge to salvation and its progressive attainment in the process of growth thus yields intimations of the transcendent. But the transcendent is not synonymous with the supernatural. The *supernatural* is that which *contravenes the known laws and processes of nature.* The *transcendent* is merely that which *lies beyond their domain.*

There is need at the present time for a description and normative study of the human process of striving after salvation, as reflected in the process of human growth. The various religions and philosophies, political and ethical systems, as well as histories of peoples and biographies of human beings in all walks of life, ought to be analyzed from the standpoint of what they can teach us concerning man's quest for the good life, the full life or the life abundant. This would give us for the first time a real science of human life. That science would be Soterics.

Book Notes

THE WORLD OF SHOLEM ALEICHEM, by Maurice Samuel, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1943, 331 *pages.*

MENDELE, Peretz and Sholem Aleichem are the three "pillars" of modern Yiddish literature.

Mendele Mocher Seforim (Sholem Jacob Abramowitch) was born in 1936 and died in 1917. The Jewish world that he depicted was firm and stable; it was held together by tradition, rooted in centuries of collective experience. Some of it was good and some of it was bad, and Mendele resorted to satire to expose what was bad in it. Mendele was not so much concerned with individual men and women, with their private sorrows and joys, as with the community, with *kahal,* and, on a higher level, with *keneset yisrael.*

Yitzchok Leibush Peretz was born in 1851 and died in 1915. As he began to write, Jewish life was breaking out of its millenial mold; was taking on a social and spiritual mobility. This was partly due to external circumstances: the massacres of 1881 and of the early twentieth century, the dissolution of the Jewish townlet "economy" in the wake of the emancipation of the serfs and the introduction of the Industrial Revolution into Russia. But it was also due to factors fermenting within the Jewish community, to new movements and forces which came into being as an *inner* answer to these external circumstances. These forces were primarily social and national, and, although new in form, direction and ideology, derived their strength and inspiration from the cumulative Jewish heritage of martyrdom, courage and devotion to a religious ideal expressing itself historically in the quest for justice and loving-kindness. It is symbolic and instructive that the first Zionist congress and the first conference of the socialist *Bund*—the initial manifestations of an organized *national* and *social* consciousness—were held in the same year, in 1897.

Peretz witnessed this, and—although in his early writings there is also discernible a strain of satire—turned to romanticism. He turned to romanticism not as a truancy from the compulsions of life, not as a retreat from the coercive present; he went to the past to discover the *sources* of the strength and inspiration of *his* generation. He made the *legend* of yesterday his theme so that it might light up the *reality* of today—the Jewish scene in its contemporary configuration.

Sholem Aleichem (Sholem Rabinowitch) was born in 1859 and died in 1916. His own Jewish world was not only socially and spirtually mobile; it was physically mobile too. Indeed, it was losing its boundaries; Mendele's stability was gone. The townsfolk were leaving for the larger Russian cities and there was already in full process that vast migration that brought some two million Jews to a new "promised land," to America.

Mendele gave utterance to his love for his people by chastising them, by the scorn of his irony, by urging them to get rid of the sycophants, the communal exploiters, the oppressors of the "little people," by opening up their windows and

doors so that the sun of knowledge and secular learning might shine in, and, finally, after his disappointment in the limited objectives of the *haskalah,* by asking them to drink of the full and everlasting fountains of *Jewish* knowledge and wisdom. Peretz gave them a wonderful gift; he chose, out of their past, the most glorious and precious moments; he selected, from among those who preceded them, the sweetest and saintliest of men, and endowed them with life again, and with meaning, for *his* generation. What was Sholem Aleichem to do? The satirist had chastized and the romanticist had cherished, and now he was seeing this community in dissolution. Was he to weep and to lament? Was he to sing with the ancient prophet—"We have hung our harps upon the willow-trees"? Or, perhaps, was he to yield to an easy optimism and to cry out: "The king is dead; long live the king"? Would it mean farewell to a world that *was*—and which would live on as a part of the new world only if it underwent a poignant period of adjustment—if he, Sholem Aleichem, were to tell its story, if he were to paint portraits of its people, of its simple men and women and children, if he were to evoke its mood and to define its milieu.

Sholem Aleichem, thank God, decided not to weep over that which must be, nor to mock it and to laugh at it, nor to disregard it and to make light of it; he decided to see it, not as the satirist with *didactic* eyes, nor as the romanticist with *enchanted* eyes, but as the *humorist.* Sholem Aleichem decided to look at this world as one who accepts it with a gentle and sad smile and then sees it with all its little and large sorrows and joys and aspirations and passions *sub specie aeternetatis,* sees in the *Yerushalayim shel matah* (the terrestrial Jerusalem) the *Yerushalayim shel maalah* (the celestial Jerusalem), and see it not in some special and exultant experience, in some special and esoteric individual, but in the simple folk, the common folk, the workaday folk in their simple, common and workaday world. It was thus that Sholem Aleichem was able to call himself *Sholem Aleichem,* to take as his pseudonym the daily greeting used in the home, in the synagogue and in the market-place by common folk as they meet each other, smile at each other, do business with each other, and even quarrel with each other. It rings so right and it seems so simple. How could it have been otherwise?—Sholem Aleichem *was* Sholem Aleichem.

It was a wonderful and a fortunate thing that Sholem Aleichem looked at this world with tender and compassionate humor, with a sweet and comprehending smile, that he had the courage to laugh—though seldom; far too often his laughter has a tear in it, and it is the *smile* that is characteristic of his humor rather than carefree, open laughter springing from mirth and gaiety. It is fortunate because that world now lives forever in the works of Sholem Aleichem; and it lives not as a lugubrious memory, not as something to be afraid of, nor as a purely disembodied realm of the spirit. It lives as a real world, with earth and sky and wind and rain, with men and women and children hungry and poor, with tailors and rabbis and *melamdim,* with *luft-menschen* and artists and dreamers. It is a real world and it is a lovable and a touching world because it was lighted up for us with the real and lovable and touching humor of Sholem Aleichem.

Little of that world is now left, and there is nothing one can do against the attrition of time and the dialectic of historical change. But surely some values are timeless and some truths are permanent and their career need not be cut short in the climate of a new social and his-

torical context. And so the pity is not that the world of Mendele, and Peretz and, above all, of Sholem Aleichem has vanished; the pity is that the *memory* of that world is vanishing and the knowledge of its meaning, its wisdom, its vision, its lore and — let us add quickly — its *language.* A generation has arisen in America without knowledge, and therefore without love, of this world, of the things it lived by and the language it lived with. It was Spinoza who taught us that things must not be wept over and must not be laughed over but must be understood. The great sage was only partly right. Things must be, by all means, understood, but they can be understood only after they have been laughed over and wept over. *Vayakam melekh hadash asher lo yada et Yosef*: a generation has arisen which does not even know the language of this world, the language which is not merely a congregation of words to be found in a dictionary but the living heart and the thinking mind of our parents and grandparents and contains *lacrymae rerum,* the tears that are in things and in the heart. Educators and teachers and writers and even rabbis have arisen to whom this lore and this language are alien and romote. Can we reconstruct our life in America, can we build anew and again if we know not what the *construction* of yesterday's life was, if the architecture of our parents' home is unknown to us? At any rate, can we do it with piety and with intelligence?

It is the great merit of Samuel's book that it recreates this world, that it gives us its life and its light. Mr. Samuel's book is neither an exercise in archaeology nor an excursion in geography; nor is it even, as he himself avers, a pilgrimage and an act of necromacy. For it was only three times a year that Jews made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and necromancy is a sin for all of us, even as it was for Saul. What was unworthy and trivial in this world has fallen by the wayside, and what was good in it must not be remembered as the dead and far-away are remembered but must pass into our present as the tones of orchestrated music, as the mellow years of a life. And it is this kind of a world that Samuel has given us. There are two worlds in the book and they are really one: Sholem Aleichem's world and Samuel's. And it is difficult to say where the one ceases to be and the other begins. Mr. Samuel's mind is an adult mind and so he does not wander off into a world, associated perhaps—although Samuel does not come from Sholem Aleichem's *physical* corner of the earth—with his own childhood and early boyhood. In consequence, the world he gives us is not a child's world, is not merely a place transformed and fixed in the memory and mind as an object of nostalgia. It is a tridimensional world and it is a grown-up world and it has all the attributes of a living world in which men and women and children actually think and dream and do.

The truth of the matter is that Samuel's book is a fine novel—one of the finest I've read in a long time—and its *theme* is Sholem Aleichem's world and it is *peopled* with characters, with men and women, out of Sholem Aleichem's world. The characters are Sholem Aleichem's and the world is his but the novel is Samuel's, and it is a story that could not have been written twenty-five years ago. The promise of Samuel's book dwells in the fact that it was written and that it is the work of a man whose own world has absorbed, has taken into itself, much of the world of Sholem Aleichem. In the "Conversations" Goethe says to Eckermann: "If you find a great master, you will always find that he used what was good in his predecessors, and that it was this that made him great. Men like Raphael do not spring out of the ground." How

much truer this is of a people! Its children do not spring from stones; they are not born in tents somewhere in the desert. At least the two million Jews born in America do not spring from stones and were not born in desert tents. They would know this a little better and would know themselves a little better if they took the trouble to learn something about their history from the *tents* in the desert 3400 years ago to the grave-*stones* of yesterday, the grave-stones of their grandparents lying in the cemeteries of Sholem Aleichem's world.

Sholem Aleichem beheld the passing of *his* world into *our* world which he accepted as his too. Sholem Aleichem lies buried in Mount Nebo Cemetery in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn, the cemetery of the Workmen's Circle, among his own, for he had said: "Let me be buried among the poor, that their graves may shine on mine, and mine on theirs." Mr. Samuel has shown that not only Sholem Aleichem's grave can shine on ours, but that his world can shine on ours too. That world shines and lives in Mr. Samuel's book which is a tale of two worlds, of Sholem Aleichem's and of our own as it may be, as it should be.

ISRAEL KNOX.

BLACK LAMB AND GREY FALCON, by Rebecca West, Viking Press, 1941, *New York.* 1181 pp.

HAILED as one of the outstanding works of literature since the beginning of the war, Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (A Journey Through Yugoslavia) has decided interest for the Jewish reader.

Superficially, of course, the two volumes do contain specific Jewish references. A few of the personalities described are Jews. Especially prominent in this respect is the poet-statesman, Constantine, energetically Serbian and passionately attached to the Orthodox Church, even though, or perhaps because, he is of Jewish descent. Many of his friends are Jews and he reveres the memory of his old teacher, Henri Bergson. Unfortunately, Gerda, his wife, is so pure a German as to turn their marriage into a symbol of the entire Nazi outrage which is to come. There is a Serajevo chanteuse, too, whose sophistication the author identifies with Semitic grace. Besides, a whole little circle of fellow epicureans, addicted to stimulating conversation and tasteful living, happen to be Jews. We find, moreover, random and provocative remarks about the position of the Jews in the Balkans, and a mistaken evaluation of Zionism based on a narrow interpretation of that term. Yet all of this is only incidental. The real value of the book for us lies not in these stray, if obvious, references, but in its deeper implications.

In the first place, Miss West's tragic dedication "To my friends in Yugoslavia, all of whom are now dead or enslaved," is arresting. Yes, there is tragedy here, but it does not have the grand sweep of simplicity, since for most of us the Balkan scene is one of complexity and confusion. We are vaguely familiar with the intermittent and internecine strife there prevalent. So much have we heard of grave theological, linguistic and political division, that we forget the presence and possibility of a certain unity. Thus, do not we, ourselves, as honest members of a minority group, have to confess from time to time to despair when we compare the knotty tangle of petty wrangling in our little realm with the seemingly simple issues in the broader field of the majority?

Touching, too, because it is the utterance of a woman who is part of a world empire, is the defense of little peoples and her assertion of the worth of vital minor-

ity cultures as opposed to vapid cosmopolitanism.

Last, there is her stirring attack on Augustinianism, the apotheosis of suffering as good, if not, indeed as God. (This doctrine, which on hurried reading may seem akin to paganism, but which closer examination proves to be very near the classic Jewish position, is foreshadowed in the author's modern credo, "I Believe." In *Black Lamb,* however, it is given full-bodied presentation.) Since such sentiment comes from an heir of Christianity and western civilization, it demonstrates that certain Jewish religious emphases need not fear to break a lance against orthodox Christian positions, depite the formidable artillery of neo-obscurantists.

True, there are fleeting inaccuracies and obvious prejudices in Miss West's approach to political and sociological problems. Here the writings of Louis Adamic and Stoyan Pribechevich on Yugoslavia may serve the careful reader as correctives. But her central thesis abides. The stubborn fight of the Balkan peoples for independence of soul against the brute force of the old Turk and the unprincipled cunning of the great European powers, more than to be commiserated, needs to be recognized and applauded, and this, in spite of the fact that the peoples who have suffered so much have been severely deformed and degraded.

What thoughful Jew, in concurring with this, however, can fail to feel the applicability of Miss West's thesis to his own people? Here is a dilemma which calls for a solution while, as a romance of the ages, it cries for a fitting chronicler, too. Man or woman, Jew or Gentile, would not matter. Essential is a great artist, willing to undertake an arduous physical journey through the territory where Israel's contribution has been rich, and an even more exacting spiritual voyage, which in itself would have to be two-fold—an exploration not alone of the soul of the Jewish people and its faith, but also, as in the case of *Black Lamb,* a revelation of the author's own spirit.

HERBERT J. WILNER

CORRESPONDENCE

More on the Place of Hebrew in Jewish Life

Sirs:

I should not like to be drawn into a prolonged argument with Rabbi Louis Barish on the question of the place of the Hebrew language in Judaism. But some of the statements made by Rabbi Barish in his letter to THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, Vol. IX, No. 16, are, to my mind, both erroneous and dangerous in their implications. I feel impelled, therefore, to comment on them briefly.

Rabbi Barish reminds me of the fact that the Hebrew language "has ceased to register the emotion it once granted, among a very great proportion of American Jewry." Hence, by implication, it should be allowed to die peacefully. But by the same line of reasoning, the synagogue, Sabbath observance and virtually the whole gamut of Jewish religious ceremonials should be left to the same fate, because they have ceased to function "among a very great proportion of American Jewry." Would Rabbi Barish accede to this?

Rabbi Barish reiterates the old erroneous argument that language is but a form and that the essential thing is the content which is independent of the form. Such a view is both alien to the genius of Jewish tradition and untenable in the light of modern psychology. Judaism recognizes no dualism of body and spirit, or of form and content; and modern psychology rejects any dichotomy of language

and thought. Language is an instrument for thinking and feeling, not merely a vehicle or receptacle for our thoughts that can be exchanged at will. We think and feel in words and by means of words, and the language of a people is the nerve-center of its thought-pattern and world-outlook. I have dealt with this aspect at length in my article on this subject in THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, Vol. VIII, No. 3, and I see no need of belaboring this point here any further.

Rabbi Barish seems to suggest that I invented the terms "atomistic" and "field" approach in order to defeat his arguments. This, of course, is not so. Anybody who is acquainted with modern science and psychology knows these terms. The "atomistic" approach is generally discarded and the "field" approach is generally accepted. In the light of the "field" concept it is impossible to analyze intelligently one phase of a pattern in isolation. To discuss one basic aspect of Judaism without relation to the others is like discussing the properties of a chemical element in a compound without relation to the other elements composing the compound. An element in isolation is not the same as this element in integration. This fallacy of employing an "atomistic" approach underlies all the newly revived discussions as to whether Judaism is a race, religion, nation, or what not.

As for the case of Alexandrian Jewry, there were undoubtedly devoted and loyal Jews among them as long as the seeds of the Hebraic tradition, left there by previous generations, were still alive and rooting. However, after these seeds had lost their vitality, this Jewry probably died from inanition. In any event no historian can point to any "religious and cultural products" left by them, which "retained and reflected the spirit of Judaism."

WILLIAM CHOMSKY.

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